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The Forsworn

A Pointy Hat Paladin Lich

Forsworn are born in the same way all paladins are born: with an oath.

A Paladin seeking lichdom swears an oath, an undying oath. Most times paladins do not forsake their previous oath when taking on an undying oath, but those that do become oathbreakers before ascending to lichdom. The ritual where a paladin lich becomes a Forsworn is simply called by other Forsworn as the accolade. In it, the paladin is knighted anew. The sword used in the accolade is rested on both of the shoulders of the paladin, and then plunged into their chest, piercing the paladin's heart and ending their life as a paladin, rising then as a Forsworn, beholden to their new undying oath.

To those familiar with lichdom and unfamiliar with the ways of the Forsworn, this might seem quite effortless when compared to the way others achieve lichdom. This could not be further from the truth, for Forsworn are liches that achieve lichdom communally.
There is no lone Forsworn, there is only an order of Forsworn. Forsworn exist only in groups sworn to the same oath, serving as knights under the same banner. Each member of a Forsworn order must swear the oath, and more importantly, believing most fervently. Just like a paladin gains incredible powers from believing and abiding by their oath, a Forsworn gains true undeath through swearing off life, rejecting the respite of death, and doing so as a group of paladins. This ensures that selfish or just personal reasons behind achieving lichdom are off the table for Forsworn, as each must swear the same oath and believe in it with all their will. The exact number of paladins needed to swear the same undying oath is unknown, a closely guarded secret by Forsworn orders, but new paladins can join an existing Forsworn order, strengthening their numbers and, paradoxically, making each member's existence as a Forsworn harder.

Forsworn look the same as they did in life, except for the unhealing wound in their chest taken during the accolade ritual, but if members of the order are killed, their appearance gradually deteriorates. The more members of an order die, the more decomposed the surviving members look, until the last surviving member of a Forsworn order is a walking skeleton wearing the armor of the order.
But the death of order members is not merely a matter of aesthetics for Forsworn, it's a matter of life and death. Just like lichdom is communal for Forsworn, so is their key to eternal unlife. Each member of the Forsworn order is, in turn, a phylactery of the members in the same order. This arrangement ensures that as long as one existing member of the Forsworn order still stands, the others will come back to the world of the living.

But Forsworn are knights, creatures of action. They may fight in gorey battlefields, or take part in bloody skirmishes and dangerous missions, either to uphold the original oath they made before they became Forsworn, or, more commonly, to feed on the souls of their enemies, the sustenance to their unlife which all members share communally within an order. However, each of these dangerous battles and incursions threaten to be the end of that particular Forsworn. If this does indeed happen, all other members of the order must then congregate in the same space, and swear their oath again. This is the reason why Forsworn orders don't grow into the hundreds of members. Maintaining a Forsworn order in the hundreds will take the same amount of souls regardless of how many Forsworn are currently alive, and gathering all of the living members under the same roof to bring those that died back would prove impossible past a certain number of knights.

Existence within a Forsworn order proves to be a particularly challenging tightrope to walk on, both because there is no shortage of actual paladins that have made it their own oath to put an end to all undead, and also because of the complex ways in which their existing oath might conflict with the reality of existing as a lich that needs to reap souls for sustenance. Regardless of why a new order of Forsworn decided to walk this treacherous path, Forsworn are created by a group of people believing so strongly in their commitment to an oath that they manage to transcend the bindings of life and death. This, along with their communal nature which is extremely rare in other liches, makes Forsworn both powerful allies and terrifyingly powerful enemies.

FORSWORN

Medium Undead, Any Alignment

Armor Class 20 (plate, shield)
Hit Points 230 (20d8 + 140)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
21 (+5)	17 (+3)	24 (+7)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Dex +10, Wis +9, Cha +11
Skills Athletics +12, Insight +9, Intimidation +8, Perception +6
Damage Resistances Cold, Necrotic
Damage Immunities Poison; Bludgeoning, Piercing, and Slashing from nonmagical attacks
Condition Immunities Charmed, Exhaustion, Frightened, Paralyzed, Poisoned
Senses Darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 12
Languages The languages it knew in life
Challenge 21 (25,000 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +7

Aura of Undeath. All creatures within 30 feet of the forsworn have disadvantage on their death saving throws. Additionally, any healing administered to any creature within 30 feet of the forsworn by anyone but the forsworn is divided in half, rounding down.

Bond of the Order. When a member of a forsworn's order's hit points are reduced to 0, all members of the order regain all spell uses and uses of *Channel Divinity*.

Ever Baleful. The forsworn has access to all fighting styles it knew as a paladin before transforming into a forsworn.

Ever Faithful. The forsworn has access to all aura abilities, uses of *Channel Divinity*, *Oath Spells*, and Level 20 ability it had as a paladin before transforming into a forsworn. If the forsworn breaks their original paladin oath, it gains any aura ability, uses of *Channel Divinity*, *Oath Spells*, and Level 20 ability of an Oathbreaker Paladin.

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If the forsworn fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Order of Phylacteries. If there are any remaining living members of its order, the forsworn gains a new body after all remaining members recite their oath at the place where their accolade ritual was first performed. The time it takes for the forsworn order to recite the oath depends on the amount of living members:
- 5 or more living members: 1d4 months
- 3 to 4 living members: 1d4 weeks
- 1 to 2 living members: 1d4 days

Turn Resistance. The forsworn has advantage on saving throws against any effect that turns undead.

Undead Smite. When the forsworn hits a creature with a melee weapon attack, it can spend one use of a spell to deal necrotic damage to the target, in addition to the weapon's damage. The necrotic damage dealt depends on times the forsworn can use a spell per day.
- Spending a use of a spell the forsworn can cast 3/day: 3d8
- Spending a use of a spell the forsworn can cast 1/day: 5d8

Actions

Multiattack. The forsworn makes three longsword attacks. It can replace any of these weapon attacks with a use of *Lay on Harm*. It can also cast a spell and make one weapon attack. Any spell the forsworn has with a casting time of a bonus action can be cast as a bonus action instead of a full action.

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d8 + 5) slashing damage, or 10 (1d10 + 5) slashing damage if used with two hands, plus 10 (3d8) necrotic damage.

Lay on Harm. The forsworn has a pool of 100 hit points. It can touch a creature within 5 feet of it.
- If the creature is undead: The forsworn can restore a number of hit points to that creature, up to the maximum amount remaining in its pool. The forsworn can choose to heal itself.
- If the creature is not undead: The forsworn makes a melee spell attack (+11 to hit). On a hit, the forsworn can spend any number of hit points from the pool to deal half as much in necrotic damage to the creature. For example, on a hit, the forsworn can spend 50 hit points from its pool of hit points to deal 25 necrotic damage to the creature.

Spellcasting. The forsworn casts one of the following spells, requiring no material components and using Charisma as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 18):
- At will: *any first level Oath Spells*
- 3/day each: *any second or third level Oath Spells*
- 1/day each: *any fourth or fifth level Oath Spells*

Legendary Actions

The forsworn can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The forsworn regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Attack. The forsworn makes a longsword attack.

Fortress. The forsworn increases its AC by 2 until the end of its next turn.

Spell. The forsworn casts a spell.

Forsworn Wrath (Costs 2 Actions). The forsworn selects a creature it can see. The next saving throw that creature makes is made at disadvantage.

Maneuver (Costs 2 Actions). The forsworn moves up to half of its movement without provoking attacks of opportunity.

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